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Frontispiece.

THE PARSONAGE.

THE
CHILDREN OF THE PARSONAGE

A true story of long ago

BY
CAROLINE STETSON ALLEN

FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF "PIGGY"

REPRODUCED BY
MARGARET ELIZABETH ALLEN
With Photographs taken by "P. C. PHOTOGRAPH"

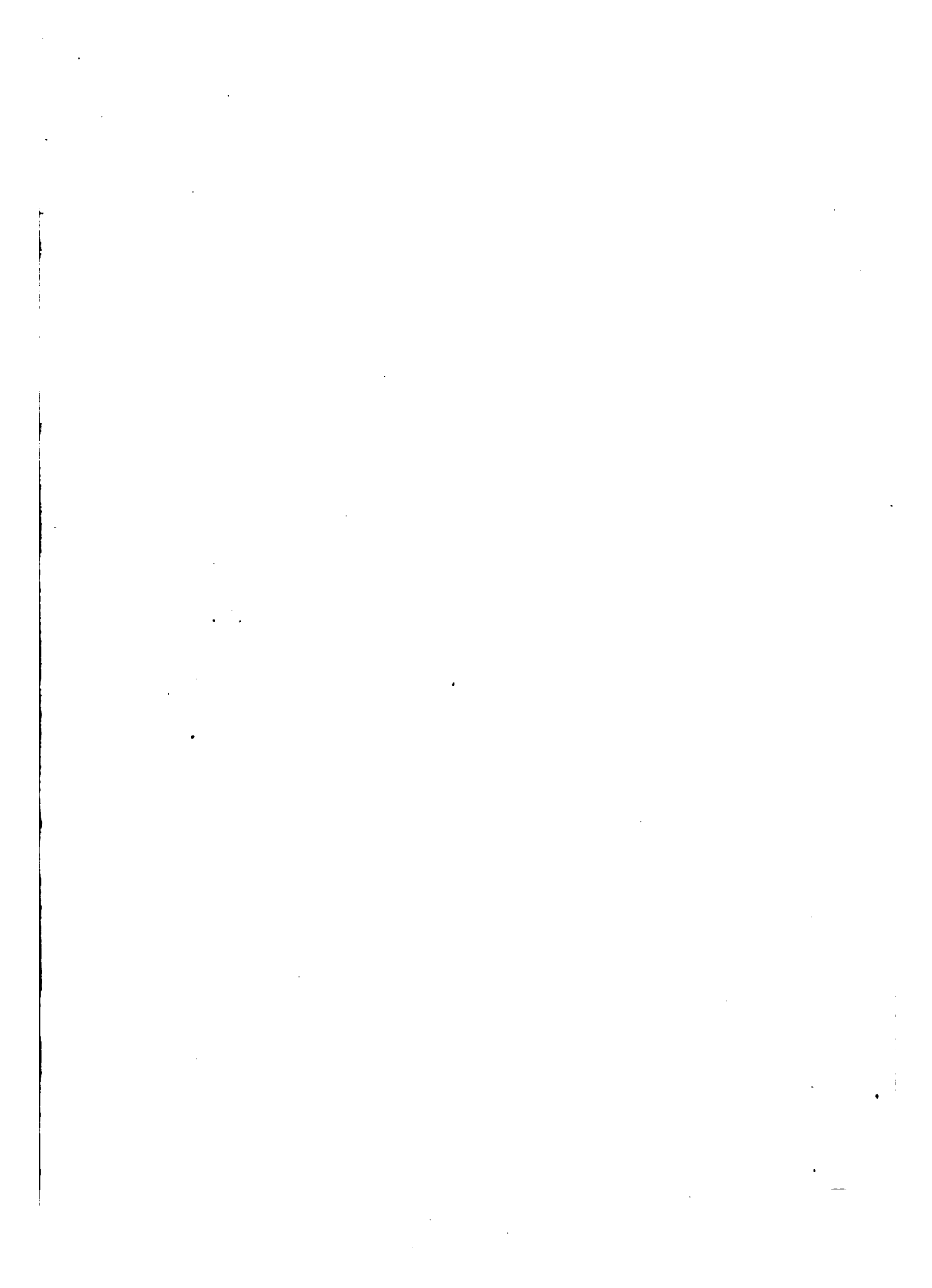
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Frontispiece.

THE PARSONAGE.

THE
CHILDREN OF THE AMERICAN
INDIAN

BY
J. W. FLETCHER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
J. W. FLETCHER

NEW YORK
G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
1890

EDITION
GEORGE H. FLETCHER, 215 N. 3RD ST. N. Y.
1890



FIG. 1. PASSAGE.

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THE CHILDREN OF THE PARSONAGE

A true story of long ago

BY
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FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF "PEGGY"

ILLUSTRATED BY
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With Photographs taken in "Fearnborough"

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1900

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BY
CAROLINE STETSON ALLEN

To the memory

**OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE PARSONAGE AT "FEARNBOROUGH,"
AND IN SPECIAL MEMORY OF**

"Kenneth,"

**THE ONE NEAREST AND DEAREST TO ME, MY FATHER, THIS SIMPLE
SKETCH OF BY-GONE WAYS IS DEDICATED.**

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INTRODUCTION.

I WAS so fortunate, when I was a youngster, as to live only ten miles from the Fearnborough of this book, and to be honored by the personal friendship of the patriarch, not then a patriarch, whom it describes.

Snobs and fools like to call such a life as his a narrow life. To those who honor us by reading these pages — that is, to those who are neither snobs nor fools — I will tell a little story.

At the request of a French gentleman interested in our system of public education, which was then better than theirs, I asked our dear old friend, in the year 1853, how many of the young people of the town where he resided left the town to go out as teachers to the rest of the country. He answered frankly. Evidently, he was surprised by my question. He took it for granted that I knew. "Why, all of them," he said.

This really meant — though it never seemed to him that it was his work — that in one detail only of his great duty he had watched the public schools, till they interested while they taught every child who was sent to them. It meant that these boys and girls grew up alive in the higher life and able to lead others into it. It meant that, when they came themselves to be men and women, they were willing and were able to go out to be teachers in the rest of the world.

I carried back the answer to my French friend with a

certain satisfaction. He had landed at Montreal, had studied the public education of Canada and then of the valley of the Mississippi, and everywhere, as he said, had found that "the people of two *provinces* — Massachusetts and Connecticut — furnished the teachers for the rest of the United States and of Canada."

Of course, many of these apostles returned to the dear home of their childhood. But many did not. And they carried, as so many inspirers of a higher life, the inspirations and the ambitions of Fearnborough to half a continent.

There exists a little volume of local history, for which the dear Doctor is himself responsible, which in a modest way tells the story of one — only one — of the achievements of his lovely and admirable wife. She had been reading, in some English journal, of the first efforts made in England to encourage thrift among working-people, — efforts which have grown into their great systems of savings institutions, — indeed, into the government provision by which the nation assists its people in their economies. "Why not in our country as well as in England?" asked this estimable lady. And at her suggestion our dear patriarch, not then a patriarch, carried these plans to the County Association of Ministers, who put it into the form which resulted in one of the first and one of the most successful savings institutions of this country.

That happy home of his and of hers most naturally attracted every one who knew it. If it could be so arranged that John or Tom or Jem or Fred could be sent to Fearnborough to be a member of that household for a summer or for a year, happy for the boy who was so sent. That boy lived in the open air. So far he learned the

great central secret of happy and of useful life. That boy saw that there is something better than money, and that "success" is not to be measured by the accumulation of money. If the boy did not learn that he was a child of God, and might live with the joy and vigor of a son of God, it was no fault of the patriarch or of the rest of the household.

For us of the generation which he and those like him trained, it is a pleasure that devoted and loyal descendants have brought together these memorials of noble lives, which must not be forgotten.

EDWARD E. HALE.



THE MEETING-HOUSE FROM THE BROOK.

THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE.

BY ONE WHO REMEMBERS.

SEVENTY years ago the pretty New England village of Fearnborough contained but one church, or, I should say, meeting-house, as no one then "attended church," but "went to meeting." The meeting-house stood about a quarter of a mile from the village on a low hill, and from this elevation it overlooked the surrounding country. Its position and simple but pleasing form gave it an air of dignity, as if it held aloof from the busy street life; and yet in many ways it seemed to have an interest in the well-being of the people of the town. The shining vane on its spire could be seen from many a near and distant farm, and showed the neighbors the direction of the wind, so that they could judge what weather to expect and plan their work accordingly. The sweet-toned bell sent its daily message to all within hearing. On Sunday morning at nine it rang to warn the neighbors that it was time to prepare to start for meeting. At ten it rang again; and five minutes before service time it tolled to announce that the minister was in the pulpit, or entering it, and that the congregation, who in fine weather might be still chatting socially outside, should take their seats. Seventy years ago there was always a second and often a third service, and distant families brought their lunch and stayed to the second one. The minister's children remembered seeing some of the old

or feeble persons coming down to the parsonage to eat their lunch by the fireside of the large kitchen, where the minister's wife welcomed all and made them comfortable, and filled the foot-stoves with glowing hickory coals.

The bell again rang, after an intermission in winter of but a half-hour and in summer of an hour or more, for an early service, allowing distant farmers to reach home in time for their evening work. Again it rang for a third service.

After its Sunday labors, which gave the sexton a busy time, it was rung again at noon of each week-day, to give notice to the village people that the hour of mid-day rest and refreshment had come for man and beast; and at nine in the evening its voice gave warning to all that it was time to go home, and the distant farmers, who were gathered in or about the village tavern or grocery, promptly unhitched their horses, and each took his way home, scattering to every quarter of the town. The bell also seemed to take a deep personal interest in the business and even in the sorrows of the town. It summoned the men and boys to every town meeting,—the peculiar public educational institution of New England,—when the boys listened to the discussions on all matters of public interest, and so were prepared to take their turns by and by in caring for the welfare of the place.

Sometimes was heard at an unusual hour a slower ringing, followed after an interval by a single solemn tone or, perhaps, two or three; and it was known that a man had ceased his earthly labors, or a woman had passed away, or some family had been bereaved of a dear child. Then after a suitable pause the tolling began again, and sounded the age of the departed one. Occasionally a sudden alarm from the usually cheerful and sweet-toned

bell startled those near by; and in the absence of a fire department, unknown at that time, villagers left their work and hastened to find out whence the alarm. Sometimes a boy would be seen on a barebacked horse, galloping to the village to call assistance to save a home or a farmer's barn. Then were soon seen wagons loaded with men hurrying to the scene of the fire, usually too late to help much, unless it might be for a fire in the woods, when it was a long and hard task to fight the fire and save the valuable trees of some wood lot.

The bell rang also to give notice of lectures, etc., and, in fact, performed every duty possible in calling people together. It seemed to have an individuality of its own, reminding one of the famous bell, Roland of Ghent. "My name is Roland. When I am rung hastily, there is a fire. When I resound in peals, there is victory in Flanders." On the Fourth of July its merry peals awakened the neighborhood early, and sounded often through the day,—the only day when its sounds became a source of discomfort and offence. There were three doors in front, opening upon a flight of stone steps, which ran along the whole front of the meeting-house. On either side of the middle door was placed a small bulletin board, framed in black, with glass front; and our friend, the meeting-house, announced on one of these the intention of marriage between any two of its young people. This was obliged to be placed there for three consecutive public days; and often this was done by taking in a town meeting day between two Sundays, saving the blushes of the couple for a whole week. On the other side of the door was a similar board, of less interest to the young people, as it contained only announcements of town meetings, lectures, etc.

The meeting-house faced directly south, overlooking a pleasing view of the village brook, with soft meadows on either side and a pretty, wooded hill beyond; and the children used to think the beauty of the scene much enhanced by viewing it upside down, which gave it a certain charm of mystery. They accomplished this by kneeling in front of one of the doorsteps and turning their heads upside down on the steps. These steps made a favorite goal for the game of "I spy," as the house and barn of the parsonage, the horse-sheds behind the meeting-house, and the rocks at one side made capital hiding-places; and the long runs were excellent exercise, and gave much fun in trying to escape the eyes and ears of the one who was "It" for the time. I remember no name for the blinded one but "It."

At the foot of the long, gentle slope from the church steps to the level below was a bridge crossing Cold Harbor Brook; and at one side the road branched down and through the brook, where horses could be driven to drink of the clear water. The minister used to drive through almost daily; and the children watched with a certain awe and terror at first, when the brook was swollen by a dam below. But they learned to climb out and walk along the shaft and unloose the check-rein, and wait till "Shakspeare" had taken his fill, and fasten it again and climb back. Large white pebbles were scattered along the bottom, and wee fishes darted about among them, and water-spiders skimmed along the surface, making it a most interesting place to the children, and proving too fascinating to be resisted in its invitation to them to strip off shoes and stockings, and wade across on the warm white stones, or dip their feet in the cool refreshing water.



THE HILL.

When Peggy was in London, she saw several churches of much the same style of architecture as our meeting-house, and again in Italy she saw many spires, peeping from among the trees, that reminded her of those of New England; and afterward, on asking a friend how it came to be so, he replied that Sir Christopher Wren built those London churches, and his pupils introduced the style into early New England.

Seventy years ago and more, when the minister was first settled in Fearnborough, he formed an association for village improvements, and planted the common liberally with young trees, which are now grown to fine, stately elms, maples, and pines, shading the pleasant ground where his children used to play. The father and mother and many of the children now sleep in the quiet cemetery beyond the common. The meeting-house they loved so dearly stands to-day, as it did nearly a hundred years ago, overlooking the sleeping common, the meadow and sparkling brook, the quiet village, and the woods and hills far and near, undisturbed by the changes of time.

This is Peggy's tribute of love and reverence to the meeting-house, the parsonage, and the beloved village of Fearnborough.

As from the house your mother sees
You playing round the garden trees,
So you may see, if you will look
Through the windows of this book,
Another child, far, far away,
And in another garden play.

R. L. Stevenson.

They grew in beauty, side by side,
They filled one home with glee.

Hemans.

There's twa fat hens upo' the coop
Been fed this month and mair:
Mak' haste and thrav their necks about,
That Colin weel may fare;
And spread the table neat and clean,
Gar ilka thing look braw,
For wha can tell how Colin fared
When he was far awa'?

W. J. Mickle.

CHAPTER I.

ABOUT THE MOTHER.



Once upon a time there were six impatient children. No, I mistake: one of them was patient.

"He *said* he'd be here by seven," said Ruth.

"I think he might! I can't study when I think every sound is the chaise coming round," said Tom, a little petulantly, tossing his Latin grammar to the farther end of the room.

"O Tom!" said Priscilla, softly. She picked up the grammar and smoothed its rumpled leaves. "Of course, there's a real reason," she said. "Father *always* keeps his word."

The children all looked at her serene, trusting little face, and the gathering frowns stole out of their own. Even mother, who had been feeling a secret anxiety, grew easier. She drew Priscilla up to her, and stroked the child's hair. It was always beautiful, and now looked like spun gold in the light of the fire opposite, which, as if this hopeful spirit were contagious, started up with new energy.

I must explain that the father had been on a journey, and his family had counted the days and even the hours to his return.

The mother considered how she could help these restless young spirits while away the time till he should arrive. "Suppose you dance a little while," she suggested, much to the children's delight. They all flocked into the dining-room, where their mother, with the boys' help, moved the table to one side, and Henry brought forward her guitar. They knew almost nothing about dancing, but had learned money musk and Virginia reel, and enjoyed frisking about to the sweet tinkling notes of their mother's guitar as much as if they had had a dancing-master. While it was being tuned, five-year-old Kenneth, a devoted lover of music, stood as close as he could squeeze to the instrument. He was allowed to stay up to-night far beyond his bed-time, that father might be welcomed by all but the baby.

Meanwhile Priscilla and Peggy began to sing "The Coronach," from "The Lady of the Lake," singing the air and second alternately, and rather indignant that their brothers came to "take partners" before the song was finished.

But even singing and dancing failed of their usual charms after a while. The children kept flying to the windows to see if there were any signs of their beloved wanderer. Mother, even though fully sharing their anticipation, found her thoughts diverted as she watched her little flock,—smiling, blue-eyed Ruth, just budding into the fairest promise of womanhood; Henry, a grave, philosophical boy of thirteen; Tom, jolly, impetuous, a striking contrast to the next in age, gentle, nine-year-old Priscilla. More obviously his sister was the youngest girl, bright-faced little Margaret (commonly called Peggy), whose constant activity made warm enough the low-necked, short-sleeved frock which we should nowa-

days consider so insufficient for winter. The frocks of all three little girls were of a small mixed plaid called "Carolina,"—red, green, and blue, made long to the ankles; and their stockings were knit of stout blue yarn. Their shoes we should think very stiff and ugly. I mustn't forget the pantalettes, which came to their heels.

As the mother looked into the eyes of the next child, Kenneth, it was as if two beautiful, deep blue flowers leaned to meet their reflection in the brook. His eyes, even in earliest childhood, were full of truth and nobility.

The father's arrival seemed so uncertain that she now decided to take Kenneth upstairs to bed. The "baby," three-year-old Richard, had been put to sleep long ago; and we will not waken him to exhibit his many charms. On returning to the children, she was met by a demand for a story.

"My dear children, I cannot make up a story to-night," she protested.

"Tell a true one, then," begged Tom.

She still demurred a little; but "O mother," said Peggy, "about when you were as little as Priscilla and me. Oh, please, mother!"

"And begin it 'Once upon a time,'" said Priscilla; for all her favorite fairy tales began in that way, and she felt sure that a story starting otherwise would prove flat and unprofitable.

Half-hidden by the cluster of children, the mother sat reflecting. Ruth stole away to fetch her sewing.

"O mistress mine, where are you roaming? Oh, stay and hear,'" called Henry after her; for mother had begun, "When I was a little girl" ("Once upon a time," reminded Priscilla, in a whisper).

"Trip no further, pretty sweeting,'" continued

Henry; and Ruth scurried back to her place beside this favorite brother, with a half-finished pinafore in her hand.

"Once upon a time," * amended the mother, smiling, "my mother had ten children, of whom I was the eldest of five at the age of six. She had, besides, a number of boarders, school-boys and others, seldom good help, and very little of it. The first house my parents occupied was a little low building behind the academy, which I always heard called the college. The first thing I remember is moving, when about three years old, to a house built for my father, close by the meeting-house, by General Russell, an excellent friend of my father. My parents rode with two of the children; and I was carried by a gentleman whom I remember as quite an eccentric old bachelor, but I dare say was then quite a spruce young beau. After carrying me till he was tired, he set me down to walk awhile, when he discovered that I had dropped one of my shoes, and he had to go back some distance after it. I knew when I dropped it; but he, being a stranger, I was afraid to tell him of it, and so gave him all this extra trouble."

"What did you youngsters do for fun?" queried Tom. "How d'you spend your time?"

"In winter," replied mother, "coasting down a very high and steep hill, which was, of all others, my chief amusement, building snow houses in the drifts, and, when we were tired of one place, scouring fields in search of another. Our house was directly at the foot, and set into, as it were, a very high hill, which was dug away to admit it. Into this space the snow used to drift in high banks, which were fine for snow houses; and the hill itself was the best place for coasting I have ever seen.

* The mother's story is quoted, and was written by her for these children. I have changed only some names.

In consequence it was always our favorite amusement to play in the snow, notwithstanding the terrible chilblains with which we were troubled. We had a fine, large front yard, and the land stretched back some distance to the water, so we had plenty of retired places to play in; and in consequence of playing so much out of sight, and partly because our poor mother was so much of the time not able to look after us, we—I in particular, I am afraid—became very rude and hoydenish.

“At other seasons we played ball in what, to our youthful imaginations, seemed a spacious court-yard, but now looking very small. Sometimes we played soldiers with my brothers, our pinafores put on hind side before, to imitate a uniform coat, and marched to the music of the squash-vine trumpet and cornstalk fiddle, with cornstalk guns. In bad weather we passed part of the time playing with our dolls in a large garret chamber, of which our brothers occupied one corner in the same laudable employment, and performed the office of christening our babies for us when they became old enough, which in those days was before the nurse went away, who always carried up the baby.

“In compliance with this custom, when Lucy was to be christened, she was carried to meeting by the nurse; and on account of the distance they were driven there by a little black boy in a chaise which had formerly belonged to Madam Enderby. It was, no doubt, a very stylish one in its day, and evidently belonged to the aristocracy; for it had a driver’s seat just in front of the dash-board, upon which the little black boy was now perched.

“A cow was lying directly across the road; and the stupid little fellow drove directly over her, throwing

them out and breaking the nurse's arm, but without waking the baby, who at that early age began to show the imperturbable placidity which has always been her distinguishing characteristic.

"At my sister Elizabeth's birth no name could be decided upon. Our parents wished her to be called Anne, but it was such a shocking name to Lucy and me, who were old enough to have a voice in the matter,—eight and ten years old,—that we opposed it with all our might, and we finally went to meeting without having decided the important question; and we sat quite easy, thinking that all danger was over for that time.

"It was the custom to christen after the sermon; and what was our consternation and dismay to see, about the middle of the sermon, the nurse marching in with the baby. Our interest and curiosity were too intense to be suppressed, and I immediately made my way to her and asked what was the baby's name. She did not know, and we were obliged to wait in the greatest trepidation till we heard it announced from the lips of our father. You may imagine the delight with which our ears were greeted with the beautiful name of Elizabeth. But, then, when he came to record it, as we were all standing round him to see the intensely interesting operation, we saw that he wrote it with a *z* instead of an *s*, which we contended strongly against; but he was immovable, and for a long time it was a terrible grievance to us.

"My last sister, Louisa, was born when I was about thirteen; and my father, being rather in advance of the age, began to have an idea of some better arrangement for his babies than to be carried out by a hireling, and he accordingly deputed me to this office. Any one may imagine my feelings, I cannot describe them; but my

father's wish was law. I never indulged the most remote idea of disputing what he said must be, so tried to make the best of it.

"The people had been getting into the habit of remaining in the pew with the babies till they were taken up to be christened, whereas my father liked, as your father does, to have them arranged in a goodly row before him. It was a sore grievance to him, and he had long tried to break it up; but the people were stiff-necked then, as they have been ever since, and would have their own way. So he thought he would set an example in his own family such as he wished others to follow. Accordingly it was arranged that at the proper time I was to take the baby from the nurse's arms and go out to stand in the broad aisle till my turn came. General Russell's pew was next to ours, and a grandchild of his was to be christened at the same time. So, when the time came for me to act my part in the important drama, I waited, childlike, for that child to be taken out first. But, as they made no movement of the kind, of course I did not, but remained in the pew, much to the discomposure of my poor father, whose very heart was bound up, I believe, in the thing. I never saw him more disturbed at anything in my life, and sore was my compunction at the trouble I had brought upon him."

Here Ruth wanted a little advice about her sewing, and the narrative was delayed a few minutes. "Did your mother make you sew?" asked Peggy.

"Yes, dear, our mother taught us very faithfully the use of the needle. When Lucy and I were seven and eight years old, we made, each of us, a nice linen shirt for Mr. Charles P. Sumner (father of Charles Sumner), who was tutor to some boys we had in our family. It

was by his request that we did it; and, when done, he gave each of us a silver dollar. I have often thought what a Herculean task it must have been to my poor mother to superintend such an undertaking, for shirts were not made as they are now. The shirt-bands, collar, and neck gussets must be nicely stitched, and every seam sewed over and over. The gathering of the neck and sleeves, too, was much nicer than any embroidery we see nowadays."

"Did you have beautiful, cosy times evenings, the way we do?" asked Priscilla.

"At twilight I remember my father's singing with us a great deal, and trying to teach us some of his favorite songs,—'My Time, O ye Muses,' Beattie's 'Hermit,' and some others. From my mother I learned 'Auld Robin Gray,' second part; and she often used to sing to us as we sat at work.

"About this time Colonel Gray, who always spent his Sunday evenings with us, gave my father a venerable pony, aged twenty-one years, intending it, perhaps, as an act of emancipation; but it was anything else. He had always been used as a saddle horse, and never could be broken to the harness. My father, however, could not afford to keep a horse for pleasure. He, therefore, undertook to break him; but it really seemed as if all our necks would be broken first. Robert or James would always stand directly in front of him till my father had the reins firmly in his hand and was ready to start. Then he would spring on one side; and at the same moment the pony would start forward at an unheard-of speed, with his head planted between his legs. After this peremptory beginning he would slacken his speed, and go on very well, so that after a year or two we older

ones were trusted to drive him; and I have been sent with him several miles.

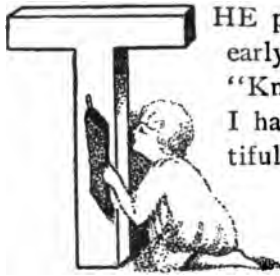
"We were allowed to ride him whenever we pleased before breakfast. This was quite an incentive to early rising; but it sometimes profited us little, for we had to catch him ourselves in a large pasture, where he would keep us chasing him sometimes till quite breakfast time. Sometimes, however, we succeeded in decoying him into a narrow corner, where, surrounded by three or four of us, he was obliged to surrender at discretion. When he happened to be in the barn, our task was a light one, and we managed to get a pretty good ride."

"'Speaking of angels,'" observed Henry, calmly, "methinks I hear"— But he got no further. The others had caught the sound of old Shakspeare's hoofs and the clatter of the chaise. "He's come!" they cried. "Father's come!" and there was a wild rush to the front door.

In a drear-nighted December,
Too happy, happy Tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity.
The north cannot undo them
With a sleety whistle through them,
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.
J. Keats.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTMAS COMES TO KNOCKTARLATIE.



THE parsonage, which Mrs. Clarke had early in her married life christened "Knocktarlatie," was situated in what I have always thought the most beautiful part of Fearnborough. A clear stream ran through the adjoining meadows, and Mount Chocorallen held supremacy among the nearer hills. The elms,

horse-chestnuts, maples, and pines, which still surround the village church and lend their whispering boughs to sound a requiem about the ancient homestead, were then hardly taller than the minister's little Margaret.

She, of the three daughters, was most like him in her thorough love of gardening,—a trait of hers the parents always rejoiced in, and which contradicts somebody's saying that "woman always did, from the first, make a muss in a garden." However ready she may have been to escape from dish-wiping or polishing of brasses indoors, among the old-fashioned posies in the garden she was her father's never-failing helper, and shared his pride in the carefully weeded beds.

The minister loved to heap with fragrant blooms the little hands of the village children. But, at the season we have now to do with, the flowers had long since disap-

peared; and the west terrace, formerly a wilderness of cinnamon roses, blackberry, bittersweet, and dogbane, looked bare and desolate enough. But not for long. Soon

“There came a troop
Of childlike forms from that cold mountain-top.
With trailing garments through the air they came,
Or walked the ground with girdled loins, and threw
Spangles of silvery frost upon the grass,
And edged the brook with glistening parapets,
And built it crystal bridges, touched the pool,
And turned its face to glass; or, rising thence,
They shook from their full laps the soft, light snow,
And buried the great earth as autumn winds
Bury the forest floor in heaps of leaves.”

A certain stage of autumn may be rather dreary, but with the first snows comes a change in our feelings. The comfortable blanketing of everything without gives a sense of cosiness and warmth, no matter how thick the icicles hang from the eaves.

The children were not allowed to coast on Sunday, but had plenty of time for that favorite sport during the week, and used to take their sleds out on the common and little hills roundabout. Coasting had been enjoyed for the past fortnight; and now it was the day before Christmas, and more snow had arrived.

Our household were up bright and early, and came downstairs to a room hardly warmed by the open fire, and with windows so thickly covered with frost that one couldn't see out. Father gave Peggy and Kenneth each a penny, which it was their favorite amusement to press into this deep frost and hold with one enduring little finger till the lower parts of the windows, the pennies



THE COMFORTABLE BLANKETING OF EVERYTHING WITHOUT.

having been picked out with a pin, were covered with impressions of the head of Liberty or the reverse of the penny.

"The coldest day yet!" announced Henry, joyfully. "Why do you shake so, Rûth? Thinking of my present to be?"

"Are we to run out into the snow just the same to-day?" asked Priscilla; for it was understood that they should, winter and summer, run around the meeting-house before breakfast.

"Not *you* to-day, dear," replied Mr. Clarke. "But out with the rest of you. Quick! Scamper!" He ran out with the laughing children, and rubbed their throats with a handful of snow, "to prevent sore throats." But there was no going around the meeting-house (which was separated from the house only by a common) nor even crossing the road. A brief run in a space near the door, where the snow had not drifted, was all that was possible, though Tom and Peggy found time to pelt the others with hastily made snowballs.

Later in the morning, borne through the still and sparkling air, were heard the shouts of farmers down the road, hallooming to their oxen. And now appeared, ploughing their way through the drifts almost over their backs, nine yoke of oxen with a sled, the broad, smooth track left by the runners promising a fine place for sliding, as the children loved to do, one foot before the other. The custom or village regulation was for those farmers who lived furthest from the centre to start out with their ox sleds and plough out the road to the next house, when the neighbor would add his oxen to the team, and go on to the next, who added his oxen, and so on, till from every road they met at the Fearnborough Tavern and took a good dinner.

"Why don't they use horses, father?" asked Peggy.

"Horses are so impatient that they cannot be used," replied the minister. "There would be danger of breaking their legs in the deep drifts."

School could not, of course, open at the usual hour; but the teams had got such an early start that Priscilla, Peggy, and Kenneth were among the first pupils to get to the school-house, Mr. Clarke taking them down in his old-fashioned sleigh. As it made its slow and jingling way down the road, one was reminded of a huge snowball rolled along and increasing in bulk; for the kind-hearted minister always let as many children as could pile inside or hang on outside, and it was a treat to many who had no sleigh-rides otherwise.

The children's thoughts were hardly on their lessons to-day. What mattered it to them that "the cat saw the kit, and the kit saw the cat, and the cat and the kit saw us," when this was the day before Christmas?

On reaching home, Peggy went in search of mother, to confide to her some important secret of the morrow, and, running into the room where Mrs. Clarke sat with her back to the door, crept timidly around to where her mother's face could be seen. "Why, mother," she cried out, "I thought it was a *lady*!"

The little girls had to do their daily stent of sewing, and after dinner Priscilla and Peggy sat with Mrs. Clarke, their task to-day seeming interminable. They sewed on the same sheet, one beginning at one end, the other starting at the middle and sewing toward the other end, mother having marked their stents with pins. When work was done, the children never had to ask what to play. They were full of their own notions, and provided for themselves plenty of games. To-day they were

eager to join their brothers, who were building huts, like those of the Esquimaux, in the orchard.

The boys cut huge blocks of snow, and built up, oven-shape, several of these huts, one of them especially large, — a fine one, — which would hold eighteen children standing. This had an entrance porch, where they stuck in pegs for caps, hoods, etc. The porch was very low, so that Priscilla and Peggy almost had to creep in; and when, inside the hut, they found snow benches, with boards upon them for seats, and a fireplace, “with a *real true* fire!” exclaimed Priscilla, in awe and admiration.

“What did you expect, Prissy? That we’d hang up a picture of mother’s new rotary stove?” asked Tom. He threw on more wood, and proudly bade his sisters observe how the smoke escaped through a hole in the roof. A group of boys were playing dominos in one corner; and in another Henry sat, studying Greek. These huts were quite pretty, and lasted a long time, as, when built, the boys poured water over them, so that they became solid ice. One year even in May a heap of ice could be seen where a hut had stood.

You have waited more patiently than did our young friends for the evening gayeties; and I wish I could reward you, as they were so amply repaid for the waiting, by admitting you to the full joy of their Christmas eve. But I am far from being able to do justice to such a scene of pure, unselfish merriment.

Priscilla and Peggy hurried into the parlor after supper, holding up by the corners their long tow-cloth pinafores (so called, some one suggested, because they buttoned behind), which had been filled by the boys with wood for the open fire. The wood-box supplied, the little girls were at liberty to skip about over the black-

and-white oilcloth, and feast their eyes on the mysteries of the tree in the corner. The room had its usual cosy, *used* look, though work-baskets, games, and some of the many beloved well-worn books had been banished to the closet for that evening.

The Christmas tree was not common in America then. The first one was introduced, I think, by Dr. Follen, a German Unitarian minister ; and Mrs. Clarke was one of the first New England women to follow his example. The boys or their father got the tree in the woods ; and it was covered with gifts made at home, simple and inexpensive, but showing thoughtful love and often real skill and ingenuity. These little presents were usually accompanied by some rhymes, the brightest and merriest by the mother, but all contributing their best. This added not a little to the fun ; and, as the children flew about to-night, exchanging verses and filling the rooms with their glad laughter, it was pleasant to see the rosy color in Priscilla's usually pale cheeks, and the sober eldest boy vying with Tom and Peggy in jokes and absurd songs improvised for the occasion.

It was easy to guess who were the givers of the first present taken from the tree, if one happened to see the eager faces of Henry and Tom, as they watched their mother open the bulky and rather clumsily tied parcel.

"What a beautiful muff!" she exclaimed. "My dear sons, how can I thank you?"

"Read the verses! Read the verses!" chorused the children ; and Mrs. Clarke readily complied.

Ye Muses, help me now to do a job that's rather tough :
I want to write a dozen lines upon my mother's muff.
The article is beautiful. The delicate outside

Is of the sleek, black, comely, smooth, well-tanned, nice little
hide
Of a beast that once lived in the woods and bore the name of
jennet;
And, if you put your hand inside, you'll find they've sewed
within it
Both silk and rabbit-skins to keep them comfortably warm,
However cold the weather is, however bleak the storm.
Oh, may the winter be as cold as ever it can be!
Oh, may the wind come furiously to blow down bush and tree!
Oh, may it be full fifty times as cold as Labrador!
Oh, may the air till April be both boisterous and raw!
So that our dearest mother may learn to appreciate
The precious gift our money bought,— the tithe of our estate.
In spite of all the winter's wind,— nay, let it do its worst,—
Her fingers will be easy, while her heart will almost burst
With gratitude to think how Henry and his noble brother T.
Contributed to buy the article that hangs on yonder tree,
To be a Christmas present for their well-beloved mother;
And may their pattern followed be by every son and brother.
Thanks, gentle Muses, that you so propitious have been.
A better Christmas ode in Fearnborough was never seen.

Next Priscilla abruptly disappeared, but was discovered peeping from behind the tree, the roses in her cheeks a shade deeper, while her father read:—

TO FATHER. FROM P. C.

I've seen trees bearing various fruits;
But, among all their various trickies,
Though I've seen many clusters of currants and grapes,
I have ne'er seen a cluster of dickies.

Then came the following, to Mr. Clarke, with a
needle and thread:—

I have sometimes been asked did I help make your sermons.
 Yes, as I'm your helpmeet through all kinds of weather,
 In this, as in all things, we both join our forces.
 You find the ideas to fill your discourses,
 And I find the thread that connects them together.
 Were it not for my thread, they'd be put to the rout :
 Every light wind of doctrine would blow them about,—
 Down the aisles, through the pews, with their freaks and
 vagaries,
 And hitting at random both Marthas and Marys.
 Like friend Hopper, the children would be almost frantic
 At seeing loose pieces of paper so antic.
 Some would soar up above us till quite out of sight.
 Bewildered, we gaze at its perilous flight;
 But, seeing it harmlessly float through the air,
 We suppose 'twas intended for some higher sphere,
 So complacently sink to our proper repose,
 And patiently wait for the sermon to close.
 If by some stray leaf we should chance to be hit,
 'Twas not meant for us, surely! — the coat did not fit.
 And, when you've prepared one with much pains and labor,
 We think it don't fit us so well as our neighbor.
 But sometimes *one* takes what was meant for another;
 And then, oh, dear me, what a terrible pother!
 A meeting is called to dismiss the offending,
 And of many poor ministers this is the ending;
 Or else they "sign off," as is so much the fashion,
 And think to hurt him by their impotent passion,
 Not seeing — the eyes of their mind are so dim —
 That 'tis hurting themselves much more than 'tis him.
 But, now I've supplied you with needle and thread,
 These calamities dire you no longer will dread.
 No more vaguely floating about in the dark :
 Wherever you aim, they'll go straight to the mark;
 And, together combined in one beautiful whole,
 They will reach to the heart and sink into the soul.

“Why, how is this? This seems to be for *you*, my dear,” said Mr. Clarke, as he came upon a small parcel addressed to his wife, the outer wrapping having borne his own name.

“Well, if it’s for me, give it to me,” said Mrs. Clarke, laughing; while the children drew near, suspecting a joke. “You may have the verses, however,” she added; and the minister, assuming an air of dismay, read aloud:—

My dearest love, last summer,
 Upon my last birthday,
 Unto you for a present
 Most humbly I did pray.

For almost half a century
 I on this earth have groaned,
 But never yet a jack-knife
 Your loving wife has owned.

And therefore I implored you
 Upon my bended knee
 That on my natal morning
 You’d give one unto me.

I did not wish to whittle
 Or hack your fav’rite trees,
 Or do any other mischief
 Which might your soul displease.

But I wished to trim the bushes
 And the dry and withered stalks,
 And cut away unsightly things
 That deface our garden walks,

Sometimes to pluck a bouquet
 When walking with a friend;

And a jack-knife in one's pocket
Is very useful for that end.

But most of all, when gathering
The thimbleberries rare,
To cut away the straggling vines
That tangle up my hair,

That prick my ankles, scratch my hands,
Pull my cap from off my head,
And cling so closely round my clothes
When I among them tread.

Thus you see 'twas pure benevolence
That prompted my request;
And, to have kept all neat and clean,
I would have done my best.

You promised me most fairly,
And in watches of the night
Sweet visions of a jack-knife
Would rise before my sight.

Oh, how I longed for morning!
Like many little boys,
To whom the owning of a jack-knife
Is the sum of earthly joys.

Now do not, I beseech you,
Infer from what I say
That on my second childhood
I entered on that day.

.

But, then, with little children
I truly sympathize;
And their fondness for a jack-knife
I never could despise.

'Tis true, sometimes most ruthlessly
 Their privilege is used ;
 But, then, you know, the best of things
 Will sometimes be abused.

And now six lingering months have passed,
 And rather more, I ween ;
 And yet before my longing eyes
 No jack-knife have I seen.

But once a clumsy instrument
 You put into my paw,
 Which, from its jagged edge, I thought
 Must be a pocket saw.

Like little boy with pocket stuffed
 From off some neighbor's tree,
 And swinging round from side to side
 Like sailors on a spree,

I carried round this jack-knife,
 But, from its ponderous weight,
 Soon found 'twould tear my pockets out
 And ruin quite my gait.

And so I bought this new one,
 And hang it on the tree ;
 And you may take it, if you please,
 And give it unto me.

I know you're not a niggard,
 And would not wish that I
 From my hard and scanty earnings
 Should my own presents buy.

And, therefore, I have had it charged,
 As I know would be your will ;

And, when you next pay up your scores,
You'll find it in your bill.

Other rhymes were read and laughed over, till at last the tree stood stripped of its last offering, and little Kenneth was found fast asleep on the floor, clasping one of his mother's feet.

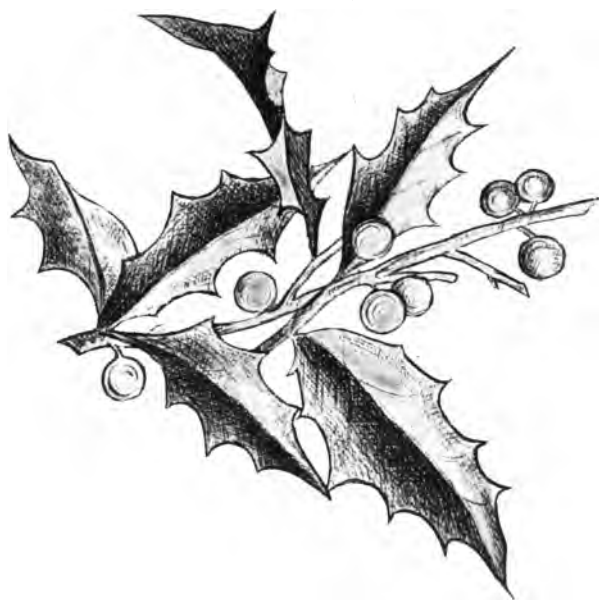
"Why, it is snowing again!" cried Ruth, running to look out at the storm.

Priscilla got up into the big arm-chair, which stood next one of the western windows. "It is no use beckoning," she whispered to the flakes, which pressed faces as flowerlike as her own against the panes. "It is lovely out there, but it is lovelier in here. I think ours is the happiest family in the world."

Before long the stockings were hung about the fireplace, and the brothers and sisters in bed and fast asleep.

"With finger on her solemn lip,
Night hushed the shadowy earth."

Christmas, with its treasures of love, with its deepening sense of the sacredness of family life, with its thoughtful care for some less fortunate ones,—Christmas had, indeed, come to Knocktarlatie!



The de'il he could na scaith thee,
Or aught that wad belang thee.
He'd look into thy bonny face
And say, "I canna wrang thee."

Robert Burns.

CHAPTER III.

RICHARD.



THE following account of Richard's early days was written, in one of the last years of her life, by his sister Priscilla:—

“Richard had very winning ways as a little child. Sunny, affectionate, lively, he never required to be amused. He seemed to think it incumbent on him to entertain visitors if no one else was present, and he was sure to be on hand if any came. He never refused to sing if any one asked him. It was as natural as to speak, although he had not Kenneth's wonderfully quick ear. One day mother was amused, on coming down to see callers, to find Richard entertaining them with a very sentimental song he had somehow learned: ‘My heart is almost breaking for the love of Alice Gray’ had a droll sound from his lips, as he was only three years old.

“Richard did not, perhaps, learn to read younger than the rest of us; but he began his career as a teacher much earlier. When he was four years old, the first Irish-woman ever seen in Fearnborough came to live with us, and remained for many years on the household staff. She was of a quaint Old World type, and entertained us with her stories of her former life and the ‘quality’ she used to work for. Richard was soon concerned to find

that she could not read, and lost no time in doing his part to make up for this defect in her education. We would see him perched on her lap with his book, teaching and correcting, while she good-naturedly indulged his efforts. He tried to teach her to spell, but her pronunciation was a sore trial to him. 'T-e-a, *tea*,' he would say over and over; and 'T-e-a, *tay*,' would be the reply, till he fairly gave up. He often greeted her in the morning with 'Mrs. More, are you pleasant or cross to-day?' 'I'm *always* pleasant to *you*, my little gentleman,' she would reply; and, though often pretty irritable with the others, she was always good-natured with Peggy and Richard.

"After a time he found he could make so little impression that he yielded to her assertion, 'Ah, my little man, I am too old to learn!' So after that he continued her education only by reading aloud to her when her work was over. What he selected I do not know, but probably his school books were as entertaining to her as anything would be. No particular notice was taken of his doings, so that he was entirely without self-consciousness, and went on in happy freedom.

"In speaking of his traits of character, I must not omit that he had an excessive shrinking from pain and suffering, even in ordinary matters, which was hard to overcome, and might have ended in a weak character; but he became a manly boy, strong in moral courage, and we know how this sensitiveness developed into sympathy for others.

"His peculiar mental traits showed themselves very early. He used to explore father's book shelves, where he found treasures of old books of history, which would have repelled most children, especially from the old-fashioned print and spelling, which never seemed to trouble him. Father was very fond of reading Shakspeare to

us; and Richard, though the youngest, was sometimes allowed to sit up to hear part of a play, and would finish it by himself. In this way he became quite familiar with the construction, and soon wrote a tragedy himself! It was quite complete in every detail, with plot and sufficiently defined *dramatis personæ*. We found many other little writings of his, in verse, most of which were rescued by Mrs. More (the Irishwoman) from his pockets in the wash, and, with these, many lists or items from history, lists of sovereigns, dates, battles, etc. When he was seven years old, I collected what I could find of his writings, and copied them into a book, the tragedy, of course, filling the larger part. The verses were usually not so good in rhythm as in the idea he wished to express. It is much to be regretted that this book was lost, for it would be interesting to show what his mind was working upon at that age.

“His interest in politics was awakened during the famous Harrison campaign, when he was ten years old, and grew with his love of history. He wrote a political song, to be sung at a log-cabin meeting that year. This is also lost. His games at this age generally turned upon his favorite subject; and many a celebrated military campaign has been carried out on mother’s chamber floor, with armies of beans or buttons, with one or two other boys, whom he initiated into the marches and manœuvres of the different forces.

“He grew up a happy-hearted boy, little dependent on circumstances for enjoyment, and with little in himself to cause trouble, though I must not describe him as impossibly perfect. The tendency to carelessness and forgetfulness, which often caused trouble to others as well as himself, was felt as a serious fault, requiring effort and energy to overcome.

"During the ten years between his fourth and fourteenth, the home became a family school, and he came in contact with many boys from very different homes and training. It was a trial for her own boys, which our mother felt deeply; and that period cannot be recalled without speaking of her tireless efforts to strengthen the family bond and the love of excellence for its own sake, to which they owed so much. It was during this period that he and Kenneth amused themselves with writing for the other boys a 'Series of Unselected Romances,' as they called it, in parody of a series of selected romances then being published. They filled their little volumes with the most extravagant adventures, illustrated with very archaic pen-and-ink drawings.

"When he was fifteen, he had a slow fever; and the day on which the doctor remanded him to his bed was Thanksgiving. How hard it seemed to us all to see him leave the lively circle! and one and another would insist on going to his room to cheer his solitude; but he was as resolute to send us away, assuring us that he had a nice time thinking. He busied himself planning, and, as soon as he could use a pen, writing out the different cards of an historical game, which he hoped to get out for the Christmas holidays, but found that one very similar was just published.

"During the following years he was one of the constant contributors to a little paper written for a society of young people to which he with his brothers and sisters belonged. His articles were always in verse, and of a humorous character. When away from home, his letters were always illustrated by queer pen-and-ink drawings."

Here the account of Richard's childhood abruptly closes.

Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
Your waters never drumlie.

Highland Mary.

CHAPTER IV.

A SUMMER DAY.



PROBABLY you have for a long time known, what I found out only this summer, that our common brake grows profusely in England. The Anglo-Saxons named many of their towns and hamlets for this "fearn." We read of Farmingham, Farnhow, etc.; and so I think it probable that our New England Fearnborough derived its title from some village in the mother country.

At any rate, the name suits it well. Some of the present generation there, under the guidance of a woman whose rare mind and deep, sincere interest in outdoor studies make her an inspiration to the young people of the town, have formed a class to learn something of the great variety of ferns roundabout.

Perhaps we have made, this dry summer, a fatal mistake in not following the old-time Scottish plan of burning great stacks of bracken to induce rain. When their king undertook a journey, messengers were sent ahead to prevent the farmers making these fires, thus, they believed, securing fair weather.

A few mornings ago I was in Fearnborough, and —

rather to my surprise, for I am an indolent body — found myself out early, picking peas for dinner. I worked my way down the rows without thought of anything but of how pleasant it was out there in the stillness, with only the far-away, plaintive notes of a field sparrow, and a chewink close by singing sweetly, if inopportunately, “Come to tea-ea!” But, just before finishing my task, I got to thinking of you all, and wished I had it in my power to give to you the right word concerning the morning’s fresh beauty.

“I have gathered a posy of other men’s flowers,
And nothing but the thread that binds them is mine own.”

I remembered that at home, among my letters from the grown-up Priscilla, was one referring to just such a dawn as I had this morning watched in Fearnborough; and when, my basket filled, I jumped up, saying, “I’ll give them her own words,” a tall sunflower across the field nodded its head in grave approval. Here, then, is a bit of her dear letter, written in 1890:—

A few days ago I woke at half-past two; and, as I did not get to sleep again till after five, I had a chance to watch the oncoming of the morning. At about three began a twittering of birds, gradually increasing and joined by insects, till the air was completely full of sound. Then came short bits of song interspersed among the twitters. Then the gray sky began to be illumined slowly. I drew my curtain to watch the process of the “rich, unfolding morn.” It was a lovely experience, and I felt as if we missed a vast deal of the beauty provided for us. Yet nature dictates, even compels, sleep, if we would be well. So it must be that “beauty is its own excuse for being,” and is the nature of the universe.

But it is high time we returned to the child Priscilla and her sister Margaret; and, if we just go back nearly seventy years, we shall find them, on a blithe June morning, in the parsonage garden. These little girls were very much like the little girls of to-day; and I have to warn you that, if you walk down the gently sloping path to where they are standing, beside a currant bush, you will find Peggy calmly eating green currants, while Priscilla is trying to pull her erring sister away from the bush.

Peggy was much stronger than Priscilla, and stronger-willed, too. In fact, she had the nickname "Touch-me-not," and her brothers thought it fun to throw her the seed-vessels that would open at a touch and scatter the seeds all around. As Priscilla was almost abnormally conscientious, she often took Peggy's misdemeanors upon her own shoulders, and felt herself to blame. Finding now her little arms powerless to hold Peggy from the too-alluring fruit, she called in distress for their mother, who presently came to the rescue.

What an attractive garden it was! One of the large boys, a boarder, had built a summer-house by taking young birches and planting them (having cut them close to the ground) in the form of an oblong, weaving the tops together for a roof, making it regular and of good shape. It was very pretty, as the birches took root and grew, and kept fresh and green. Being of a recluse nature, Andrew fitted it up for a study, and learned his lessons there. The other boys were forbidden the use of it, but he was kind to the little ones. Margaret remembers playing there, and his showing her a humming-birds' nest in the roof. A less pleasant memory is of another boarder who put her up in the crotch of a peach-tree and there left

her, forgetting all about her, going down town and leaving the poor child to her fate till he returned.

Mr. Clarke used to instruct the children in gardening, and the child who found the first wild flower in spring had a five-cent piece,—a great sum to them; and they began early to look for the flower, usually a cinquefoil or five-finger, which came out early on the dry, sunny common beyond their house.

Regretfully abandoning the bush of green currants, Peggy, at her mother's bidding, went into the house to help do up the breakfast dishes. A tub of hot water was brought into the dining-room, and placed on a tray at one end of the table; and the little girl who washed had to stand on a cricket to reach the tub, and the other wiped. So you see they were pretty small for the work. Priscilla and Peggy took turns by the day or week at washing and wiping, doing their best to join play with this work by telling stories to each other. They each invented a family, whose lives they carried on for weeks, until to the little girls they seemed real people, of whom they became fond. Priscilla had a real gift for story-telling, and Peggy's outspoken originality was very amusing. The children had a lot of girl cousins in Cambridge and Boston, and some years later, with a friend of one of these cousins, Adeline Train (afterward the well-known writer, Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney), formed a "Juvenile Book Club," of seven or eight members. They made little books, which they bound in fancy papers, and passed around,—a very minute circulating library.

When the dishes were washed and wiped and put away, it was time for school. I have heard the Clarkes tell about the dame school to which they went very young,

and which filled the place of the modern kindergarten. It was held in a rather small room, over a drug-store kept by old Dr. Wall, whose daughter was the teacher. She made it very pleasant for the children, and, when any little one was sleepy, would lay him or her on a couch for a nap. The children marched around, singing,

"Children go
To and fro,"

and were taught to sew and to read a little.

Miss Wall had a good place in which to put refractory children. A large barrel stood in the entry behind; and into this she put the child,—a safe place, and dull enough to bring the naughty one to obedience. She made a little bag, and put rhubarb into it, and, when the children talked, put this bag into their mouths. Richard had it once, and innocently brought it home to wash it, not liking the idea of its being used in common.

Once a dancing bear came, at which the children gazed half fearfully; and another time a "caravan," as it was then called, came along, with an elephant on which the little ones were allowed to ride. What a glorious thing it was to see the big fellow kneel and allow the seat on his back to be filled with children, who were half-scared and wholly delighted at the rough ride!

Priscilla and Peggy were now old enough to attend the town school. The old red school-house stood a mile from the village; and through the village they went, joined by other children as they passed along, then down a hill, over a bridge which spanned the Assabet River, where were a dam and some mills. There was on the left hand a low stone wall, built of broad, flat stones; and it was a great pleasure to run along the top of this

wall as far as they could. I think they never failed to go across in that way. There was also a steep sand-bank, which the children used to slide down. That bank is now levelled.

The school was kept three months in the summer by a lady, and three months in the winter by a gentleman, — seldom the same one for more than one term; but the scholars had good instruction generally, and got along well in their lessons. The youngest ones sat on a low bench, which ran along in front of the desks. They didn't learn much, as the teacher's time was taken up with the older ones, but were allowed to amuse themselves with their primers, slates, and pencils, drawing whatever they liked. They learned to read and spell, perhaps to count, also. The teachers were generally kind to the little ones, but were sometimes pretty severe with the older boys, who, indeed, were often very rude and troublesome. Henry and Tom once went home, after seeing a ferruling, and, getting a ruler, ferruled their own hands for practice, in case they should receive that punishment, trying to harden their hands in preparation for it when it should become their turn. The summer teacher had two bows of ribbon, red and black; and the best little boy or girl wore the red ribbon home, pinned on his or her shoulder, the naughtiest the black one, and great importance was attached by the children to this. They thought every one would notice their ribbon.

On this particular morning of late June, as Priscilla and Peggy made their way toward the village, Peggy paused by the side of a shallow brook, and announced that she should wade across.

"But it will make us late to school!" pleaded Priscilla, as troubled as a hen with one chicken.

"Not if I hurry," said Peggy, pulling off shoes and stockings in such haste that one shoe fell into the stream.

"Oh, dear!" sighed the little sister.

"Now I'll *have* to go barefoot!" exclaimed Peggy, joyfully. She loved to do so, though mother never allowed the little girls to walk through the village without shoes and stockings. The stream was low; and Peggy splashed across, enjoying the cool water and warm stones against her little bare feet.

"You'll carry my shoes and stockings, won't you, Prissy, dear?" she called back. "There they are, on the dinner-pail."

The children used to take their dinner, it was so far to walk, and had many little parties, eating them and sharing them with each other.

How much the little brooks mean to country children! So many of our plays were connected with them! The Clarke children used to go up near the west school-house, where a tiny, crystal-clear brook ran beside the road, and sail boats of shingle which they made themselves. How sweet and pleasant it was!

School closed at four; and precisely at that hour the old Boston and Worcester stage-coach, with its four fine horses and skilful driver, Mr. Wemple, appeared at the top of the hill just above the school-house. The children had just time to run out and marshal themselves on either side of the road, boys on one side and girls on the other, as the stage came rapidly down past them, when they simultaneously bowed and courtesied, much to the amusement of the passengers; while good-natured Mr. Wemple tossed them a penny.

Priscilla and Peggy had many little friends about their

own age; and one house they especially loved to go to, because the little girls there were so pleasant. They lived two miles from the parsonage; but visits were exchanged now and then, and one Saturday afternoon Priscilla and Peggy walked over to see them.

"*You* speak, when the door opens, Prissy," urged Peggy, raising the brass knocker.

"Oh, no: please do the talking," said Priscilla.

"Then you'll have to stand in front of my right leg. That stocking's all muddy. My pantalette, too,— what a sight!"

Just then the ponderous door opened; and Priscilla hopped in front of her sister, growing very red in the face, and looking anywhere but at the rather severe-looking female who stood regarding them. They had expected to see their little friends' mother, who was a remarkably cordial and well-bred woman; but this was a stranger.

"Please, ma'am, are Mattie and Jane at home?" asked Peggy.

"Out'n the medder," said the woman, closing the door forthwith.

The little girls turned, and flew to the meadow back of the house, where their friends were playing dolls. They had the real, old-fashioned Dutch dolls, wooden and jointed, with painted faces and combs in their hair. How ugly they were! yet just like those which Queen Victoria took such pleasure in dressing up, when she was a little girl. Mattie, the older of the two sisters, had a charming set of broken china, which was kept in the crevices of a stone wall; and Priscilla and Peggy used to save up any broken bits which were especially pretty to carry to her. Peggy now drew forth, from the pocket

which hung from a calico band about her waist, a choice piece of china (tiny green roses sprinkled on a white ground), and held it toward Mattie, with a pretty look of pleasure at her friend's delight.

"How lovely!" cried Mattie. "I'll only use it for Sundays and Thanksgivings and those days."

She placed her new treasure carefully in one of the crevices, between the yellow nose of a tea-pot and the blue handle of a mug, and stood off a little, surveying her china closet proudly.

"We'll have a tea-party *now!*" she said. "Father had a fresh baking this morning, and I know he'll let us have some buns and cookies."

"I wish *my* father was a baker," said Peggy, wistfully.

"I think it's beautiful to have him a minister. Other men *can* be good, but a *minister's* *sure* to be good," said Priscilla.

"Yes, a minister's a nice thing to be," said black-eyed Jane, politely, with an inward conviction, however, that the vocation of baker was far preferable.

The crisp seed-cookies had to be rather hastily disposed of in the end, because the brief play-hour was nearly over; and Peggy knew the cows were waiting to be driven home from pasture. Entering their own yard, the little girls saw on the grass in the corner a large snake. Mr. Clarke had assured the children they were harmless; and two lived in the cellar, coming out to sun themselves. Priscilla, feeling tired, went indoors; but Peggy stopped to look at the snake. She saw that there were a lot of little ones beside it on the grass; and, to her astonishment, the big one opened its mouth, and the little ones all ran in and down its throat. Peggy counted nine of them, and hastened in to tell her father about it.

The Clarkes usually had two cows; and their kind friend, Mr. W., told the minister that he would give him pasture for them with his own cows. And this he did for years. The pasture was a mile from the parsonage, along a pretty road; and it fell to the children to drive the cows up and go for them after school. Priscilla was never strong enough to do this. So Peggy and Kenneth used to go, unless he had one of his rather frequent headaches.

Cows do not want much active driving in going for their pasturage. So the children had no trouble, excepting with one cow, Bunter, who wouldn't hurry, but was pleased to stop and nibble the sweet grass along the roadside. When Peggy tried to hasten her movements, she would turn and run at her with head down and threatening horns, much to her alarm. Mr. W.'s man would drive his cows into the pasture: then Peggy and Kenneth drove theirs in, put the bars up, and went home. At night they went again, and usually found the cows waiting at the bars to be let out. To-day, however, as, somewhat late, our little girl and boy hurried into the pasture, their cows were not to be seen; and Mr. W.s' had gone home. The children were the more concerned at this because some towering clouds in the west had suddenly grown quite black. A thunder-shower was rapidly coming up, and poor Peggy was sadly frightened. But it never occurred to either of the children to go home without the cows. So they hunted energetically, and after a while went across the pasture into a grove to the further end, and there, beyond the trees, found Bunter and Sukey enjoying a last bite of grass.

With all their hurrying, Peggy and Kenneth were overtaken, before they got far on their way home, by



ROAD TO THE PASTURE AND BERRY FIELD.

violent wind, lightning, thunder, and rain. Peggy's little umbrella, which Kenneth tried to hold over her, was turned inside out, and helped catch more rain than it kept off. A tree not far off from them was struck by lightning. When they got home, their father did all he could to subdue their fears, directing their attention to the beautiful shapes of the clouds, the color of the lightning, all the good of the shower to the dried garden, etc. To all this Kenneth listened gravely; but Peggy twisted her little hand out of her father's, and, flying upstairs into her mother's room and into her big closet, hid her head among the clothes, and before long fell asleep.

There we will leave her for a time; while downstairs, as from the windows he watches the clouds drift away in exquisite, changing hues, there sink into the mind and soul of little Kenneth the foundations of a hope and steady courage which will do much, many, many years after, to shield his own children from any storms that may threaten their inner lives.

The coach is at the door at last;
The eager children, mounting fast,
And kissing hands, in chorus sing:
Good-by, good-by, to everything!

To house and garden, field and lawn,
The meadow gates we swang upon,
To pump and stable, tree and swing,
Good-by, good-by, to everything!

And fare you well for evermore,
O ladder at the hay-loft door.
O hay-loft where the cobwebs cling,
Good-by, good-by, to everything!

Crack goes the whip, and off we go;
The trees and houses smaller grow;
Last, round the woody turn we swing:
Good-by, good-by, to everything!

R. L. Stevenson.

CHAPTER V.

VISITING.



FOR eight years or more I shared the privilege Fearnborough people have of being able to shake hands once or twice a year, or at least exchange a friendly, if distant, nod with such a neighbor as Wachusett. My favorite, the trillium, is found on that mountain. Excursions are sometimes made to gather the mountain laurel,

which grows so abundantly on the way thither, and which helps beautify the church on special occasions.

The people of this old Unitarian church have, from that far-away period of Peggy's childhood to this, taken a great interest in supplying the pulpit (and the table beneath) with wild flowers; and I know of no other village where one's eyes are greeted every Sunday by flowers arranged with such simple beauty and grace. One of the prettiest arrangements I remember was of barberry blossoms, the rich, dark color of the old pulpit setting forth their yellow festoons to advantage. Mr. Clarke loved to send up his snowy lilies, the pride of the parsonage garden; and, after meeting, these would be carried to some poor or sick person.

Besides the home expeditions,—Maying, berrying, nutting, etc.,—Priscilla and Peggy had many delightful visits in Cambridge, at their grandfather's and at the old

Clarke homestead in Redfield, and at some other places; for Mrs. Clarke believed a short stay among friends to be a valuable part of a girl's training. On both sides they were a very lively family; and the elders did not condemn nonsense among the young people, but often joined in their amusements. This genial note and poem, written in Cambridge, Nov. 24, 18—, by Mrs. Clarke's brother, give some idea of the jollity then attending Thanksgiving celebrations:—

Dear James,—Having made a little song for my little folks on Thanksgiving Day, it seemed possible that you might like to sing it to your little folks, too. So I send you a copy. As we cannot be together, it will be one thing at least in common; and I trust a great many other things there will be in common besides. With love to you all.

Your affectionate brother,

ROBERT.

(*Tune*,—Sandy and Jenny.)

Come, uncles and cousins, come, nieces and aunts,
Come, nephews and brothers,—no *won'ts* and no *can'ts*.
Put business and shopping and school-books away.
Home, home with you,—home: it is Thanksgiving Day.

Come home from the college, ye ringlet-haired youth;
Come home from your factories, Ann, Kate, and Ruth;
From the anvil, the counter, the farm, come away.
Home, home with you,—home: it is Thanksgiving Day.

The table is spread and the dinner is drest;
The cooks and the mothers have all done their best.
No Caliph of Bagdad e'er saw such display
Or dreamed of a treat like our Thanksgiving Day.

Pies, puddings, and custards, figs, oysters, and nuts,
Come forward and seize them, without *ifs* or *buts*;



WAY TO THE OLD PARSONAGE.

Bring none of your slim little appetites here.
Thanksgiving Day comes only once in a year.

Now children revisit the darling old place;
And brother and sister, long parted, embrace.
The family ring is united once more,
And the same voices shout at the old cottage door.

The grandfather smiles on the innocent mirth,
And blesses the Power that has guarded his hearth.
He remembers no trouble, he feels no decay,
But thinks his whole life has been Thanksgiving Day.

Then praise for the Past and the Present we sing,
And trustful await what the Future may bring.
Let doubt and repining be banished away,
And the whole of our lives be a Thanksgiving Day.

Once, when one of the little cousins was staying in Fearnborough, she and Peggy went out after a rain, and were delighted with the little toads which came out to enjoy the freshness following the shower, but were supposed by the children to have rained down. They got a little basket, and, picking up as many as it would hold, ran over the common and behind the meeting-house, as far as the saw-mill, where it was great fun to ride on the logs as they were sawed. After a little of this sport, Peggy and Mary took their basket and went along to the old parsonage, where they were always kindly received by an old neighbor.

With childish enthusiasm, they emptied their basket on the good lady's parlor carpet, greatly to her consternation, as the toads began to hop in every direction. The little girls were set to picking them up again as fast as possible, and were quite abashed at the result of what they had thought Mrs. P. would enjoy as much as they.

She was the good neighbor to whom little Richard was sent one April Fool's Day for a bottle of pigeon's milk, for which he asked with all gravity.

The minister's household was so large, often from twenty to thirty, including pupils, that Peggy was sometimes very uncomfortable and cross with the friction; and her mother thought it wise to send her away for a while. She spent several summers at Old H., about twenty miles from Boston, the journey being made by stage-coach. Peggy stayed with her mother's sister, gentle, kind Aunt Lucy, and was very happy with her cousin Katharine, her junior by only two weeks, and always a favorite companion. They lived about three miles from Nantasket, and once in a while Peggy's uncle or a friend would take the children there in a wagon. They seldom saw any one else on the beach, a very fine one, extending seven miles from Cohasset to Hull. The horse's hoofs and the wheels of the wagon left only a slight impression on the fine, hard sand; and that was washed away by the next tide.

Peggy and Katharine were allowed to take off their shoes and stockings and wade in the salt water, which rolled up the beach in a gentle surf, perfectly safe to bathe in, as the beach was so sloping and had no undertow. The little girls picked up and carried home pretty pebbles and large clam-shells, which their mothers were glad to have for sugar-scoops. They also found beautiful star-fish of several varieties, sea-urchins, and plenty of "carragheen," or Irish moss, for blanc-mange. Now this beach is visited by thousands of excursionists from Boston, by steamers, every summer day; and the old-time charm, except that of the always beautiful sea, is gone.

In after years the children used to choose a nook among

the rocks, which were piled up into a little hill at one end, make a dressing-room by hanging a shawl over the entrance, and so put on their bathing-clothes and take a bath. What a charming place it was! The surf would come in quite high waves, but so gently that Peggy could wait till they broke over her, without any fear of accident.

Peggy and Katharine had two special friends, Annie and Susan Baxter, just their own age, and children of a very intimate friend of Mrs. Clarke. It was while visiting these little girls that Peggy met Mr. J. J. Audubon, the famous naturalist, an old gentleman, with long, curling, yellow hair, which hung down over his coat-collar. Peggy was much impressed by his beautiful manners. He won her heart by calling her "Love," and held her devoted attention at dinner-time by stories of his adventures.

In Old H. also lived, one summer, opposite Aunt Lucy's, a wealthy Boston merchant and his wife; and Peggy was appalled at being sent for to go over to see them. Though they meant to be very kind, and took her to drive in a very fine carriage, she was so over-awed at the sight of the merchant's black velvet skull-cap that she hardly spoke during the drive, and was glad when it was over and she could run to join Katharine in the hay-loft of her uncle's barn.

Once, while Peggy was at Old H., Uncle James came down from Boston to spend the day, and devoted himself to the little girls' amusement. By the way, I wonder how many of you know what an uncle is. You may know individuals who *call* themselves uncles; but do you know the real, uncle-natured uncle? The genuine uncle is one who starts up a brisk conversation with your parents

when you slink into the dining-room late to breakfast; who knows whenever a circus comes to town, and sends for you and two of your friends to accompany him thither; who is ever ready to lend you his marvellous, many-bladed jack-knife; who is prone to slap you on the shoulder, and offer you a nickel. Or, if you are a little girl, he can carve in a jiffy the dearest of cradles for the youngest of your many dollies, and is never impatient when you demand a story, not even when he has only got two-thirds down the second column of his newspaper. Such an uncle in all respects was Uncle James.

"You must see the house where your mother was born, first of all," said he; "and then"—

"Then *what*, Uncle James?" questioned Peggy, rubbing up against his knee.

"Then—then,—why, of *course*, then we'll go to see the little girl and the fishes!"

Peggy looked so mystified that her Aunt Lucy hastened to explain.

"The story of this little girl is so famous, and so many people come to see her, that I am ashamed never to have taken you there. (Just hand me my knitting, James, will you? Thank you.) Well, dear," turning to Peggy, and smiling at the child's eager little face, "little Ellen had a brother whom she loved as much as you love Tom"—

"And Henry and Kenneth and Richard," added Peggy.

"Yes, just as you love all your brothers. Ellen and this little brother used to have such good times together! Often their mother would allow them to eat their supper out on the grass."

"May *we* to-night, mother?" asked Katharine.

"I think not to-night. To-morrow, perhaps, when your Uncle James is not here."

The faces of the children fell.

"But, Lucy," interposed Uncle James, "you don't seem to recollect that I *much* prefer to eat out-of-doors. I didn't come all the way from Boston to waste a moment of this heaven-bequeathing air. Let us have supper on the lawn by all means."

The little girls smiled broadly.

"Certainly, brother, if you like it so," said Aunt Lucy, who would have meekly assented to serving tea on the roof of the barn, had Uncle James signified a preference for it there.

"Go on with the story, please, Aunt Lucy," said Peggy.

"It is a short story," said her aunt, sighing. "The little brother sickened and died; and Ellen was so lonely that she began, by and by, to notice the fishes in a little mill-pond near the house, and try to make company of them, throwing them crumbs, till gradually they became quite tame. Run and get your sun-bonnets, my dears, and your uncle will take you to see them."

This they did with alacrity, Aunt Lucy hastening upstairs after them to see that they put on fresh pantalettes, their next-to-best ruffled ones. Then she stood at one of the fore-room windows to watch their progress up the road, Uncle James giving a hand to either little girl, and all three talking with animation.

In a little house near a mill-pond, as described by Aunt Lucy, they found Ellen; and she was glad to lead them across the pretty green yard which stretched down to the edge of the pond. She had to run back to the house for something, and, while awaiting her reappearance, Peggy and Katharine threw crumbs into the water; but not a fish

could they lure to the surface. As soon, however, as Ellen came and called to them, a crowd of fishes came from every direction toward the spot where she stood. The water seemed alive with them. They were all horned pout, otherwise bull-heads, some very large. About a half-dozen she had named; and it really seemed as if these fishes knew their names, as she called them and they swam up to be fed with crumbs from her hand. When they crowded each other too much, Ellen would tap them with her spoon, and scold those who were very greedy. There were also mud-turtles, which seemed to know their names. One had lost a paw, and was called "Three Paws." Peggy never forgot the pretty and curious sight, and Ellen's wonderful control over all these little inhabitants of the mill-pond.

One of the places where Peggy delighted to visit was at her aunt's in P., where were three little boy cousins, the oldest of whom attended school with her. This aunt tried to break her of certain faults, especially of reading so constantly and absorbedly as to be oblivious to everything about her. Peggy would lie on the floor,—even across a doorway,—perfectly buried in her book; and this was, of course, very annoying to her elders. She spent one summer there as companion to the little boys, who had whooping-cough severely. The baby was so ill that Peggy's aunt took him to Cambridge, to have her brother, Dr. James —, look after him; but the poor little fellow died. So she came back alone; and it was very sad to see her unpack her trunk and take out all his little garments to lay away.

Soon afterward Peggy's uncle and aunt, with a cousin living with them and two of the little boys, went into the country in a carryall for the day, while Peggy, with the

oldest boy, Gordon, spent the day with friends. There for the first time she saw bananas, a large bunch of which a sailor-brother had brought home and hung at the back piazza to ripen. They were green, and he told her they would not be fit to eat until they began to turn black. Peggy and Gordon went home at the proper time, and walked up and down the street many times; but no one came till very late. No little girl could have had a pleasanter companion to wait with, however. I see him now, an erect little figure with tightly curling fair hair and sensitive, reserved face, the mouth peculiarly sweet and expressive. Peggy loved him almost as she did her own brothers, and now felt grateful for his endeavors to be cheery, as both children felt considerable anxiety at the family's non-arrival. At last Gordon's mother returned with the two little boys, who were all bandaged up. The horse had run away, and the whole family been overturned. The cuts and bruises of the little boys kept them in bed some days, but their father was the only one whose hurts were serious. He was taken to the house of a friend, and it was several days before he could be brought home.

There was great sympathy among their friends in the city, and many notes and delicacies sent him. Peggy's aunt used to send her long distances all about P., with messages and with dishes to be returned. As the little girl was an entire stranger, she had to rely on verbal instructions for finding her way about, but never once failed to find the place. She had Gordon for company. They were also sent to market,—Francis in the baby-carriage, Joseph holding one of Peggy's hands while with the other she drew the carriage, and Gordon pushing behind. They had to cross a square diagonally, and Peggy felt very anxious till her little party was safely across. Their pur-

chases were put into the carriage, and home they went again, the baby bent on untying the parcels before they should be withdrawn from his too keen investigation.

The family moved that same summer to a pleasanter house; and Peggy and Gordon were glad to help, drawing loads of small articles in the baby-carriage. She was a very capable child for her years, and now, away from home and to a greater degree dependent on her own resources, proved herself a real help.

When Ruth, Priscilla, and Peggy Clarke grew older, and their brothers were in college, the yearly visits to Cambridge were especially enjoyed. They would drive down from Fearnborough in their own carryall, as many as could go, sometimes stopping for luncheon at the Wayside Inn in Sudbury; and were always sure of a cordial welcome from their grandparents in Cambridge. They also stayed among different cousins. Their young uncles and aunts seemed like cousins, too.

Peggy and her sisters loved to attend the exercises of Class Day and Commencement,—to watch for the Ancients and Honorables come out and escort the Governor, and to go as early as possible to the old church where, getting seats in a front gallery, they had a good chance to hear and see. The services, although much plainer and simpler, were more dignified and impressive in those days, I think, than now.

The grandmother would send over a lunch at noon, as the girls couldn't leave their seats without losing them. The brothers had good parts at Commencement, Henry the second part, and Tom a high one. The latter was also poet on Class Day, chosen for his popularity rather than poetic ability.

Their grandfather had college boarders, and a large

family; and their grandmother would bring up to her room, where Priscilla and Peggy sat, a bushel basket of green peas, and set the girls to shelling them early in the morning. They were glad to help, and made merry over this or any other work. Ladies often washed their own china and glass in those days, and do so now in some old families in and about Boston. That is the reason so much delicate china survived from those times; but it is to be feared the coming generations will not have so much left from their mothers' stores.

When Henry and Tom were in the Divinity School, they lived in a room in Divinity Hall, and used to ask the sisters and cousins over to tea with them. Unfortunately, on one of these occasions, they had by mistake filled the sugar-bowl from the salt jar. They all seasoned their chocolate with it, and, as each one tasted, were too polite to make the error known, so sat with their chocolate untasted till the hosts themselves took generous swallows and discovered the sad truth, when all charged one special cousin, William, with playing them the trick.

But, after all, jolly as were the visits, the dearest times of all were when the brothers and sisters were gathered together again, with the good kind father and the tender merry mother, within the shelter of Knocktarlatie. Ruskin says:—

“This is the true nature of home,—it is the place of Peace; the shelter, not only from all injury, but from all terror, doubt, and division. In so far as it is not this, it is not home,—it is only a part of that outer world which you have roofed over and lighted fire in. But so far as it is a sacred place, a temple of the hearth watched over by the household gods, before whose faces none may come but those whom they can receive with love; so far as it is this,

and roof and fire are types only of a nobler shade and light,—shade as of the rock in a weary land and light as of the Pharos in the stormy sea,—so far it vindicates the name and fulfils the praise of *home*."

When stems of elms may rise in row
Dark brown, from hillocks under snow,
And woods may reach as black as night
By sloping fields of cleanest white.

William Barnes.



CHAPTER VI.

AT UNCLE NATHAN'S.

I HAVE not yet told you about the pleasant stays at Redfield, which hold such an important place in the memories of these olden times.

The Redfield cousins were very merry, full of fun and play. The visits there were sometimes in the winter; and then how glowing and beautiful looked the great bed of coals in the open fireplace on a frosty morning! and how the old farm-house resounded with the shouts and laughter of the young people!

It is odd that we do not hear more said about the cold then, but little folks easily become accustomed to any kind of life. Yet they were undoubtedly often as cold in early winter mornings as many of the little poor children we so pity now. And they were not nearly so warmly clad as our children of to-day. They wore no flannels next the skin, and the frocks had short sleeves and half-low necks. Peggy remembers her first long sleeves, and how she cried because they scratched so. She hated anything which restricted her movements, wanted perfect freedom to run and jump, and could outdo nearly every boy in school in trials of activity.

Aunt Abigail, at Redfield, was very nice and particular. Once, when she went off on a visit of a few days, she left

her daughters and nieces to keep house, which they did in the manner natural to young girls. When Aunt Abigail was expected back, Sarah said that the first thing her mother always did when she got home was to run and smell of the dish-cloth to see if it had been allowed to get sour. So the girls poured cologne over it, and hung it up to be ready for her. What she said I cannot tell you. Uncle Nathan used to prepare a terribly bitter spring drink from meadow-picra which grew behind the house, and he often insisted on the children's drinking a portion before breakfast. They considered crackers and milk a great delicacy, as Aunt Abigail stirred in the cream instead of skimming the best off.

Redfield was about twenty miles from Fearnborough. As Priscilla and Peggy grew old enough, Mr. Clarke used to let them take the horse and old carryall and drive there with their cousins, on condition that they would spare the horse, Shakspeare or Bruno, by walking up the hills, of which there were several long ones. They used to start early in the morning, taking lunch, and resting now and then under some shade-trees. What gay times they had! And at the end of the little journey what a warm welcome awaited them at the old homestead!

Our good minister and his wife were just as hospitable in their turn, and gave an equally hearty welcome to any load of cousins or other relatives driving into the yard at nightfall to spend a few days. There was never a word of complaint at any trouble or additional work, so strongly united were the families.

I must tell you about an early expedition the Redfield cousins took one winter morning. A lady called Mrs. Ashby had come several summers to stay at Uncle Nathan's farm during July; but no one dreamed of her

leaving the luxurious Philadelphia home in December. She did leave it, however, in the winter of 183—, after a great deal of coaxing from her only daughter, Dorris, who had long wanted to see the country at that season. Very reluctantly did Mrs. Ashby pack the trunks and leave directions with the servants for the three weeks' absence.

"The parties and dinners you'll miss, Dorris!" she said despairingly.

"Yes, mamma, but think of the hills, all shining with snow!" replied Dorris, pleadingly. Her mother shuddered, but went on writing a long list of rules for the house-keeper. After all, Dorris hadn't seemed strong of late, and perhaps the change would freshen her up for Marjorie Lesley's New Year Ball.

Dorris was so tired by the journey (a long, comfortless one in those days, and the latter part by stage) that she slept, next day, far into the morning. While waiting for her to come downstairs, in the interval between "doing up" the morning work and giving the final preparation to dinner, Aunt Abigail sat with Mrs. Ashby in the fore-room in front of a cheerful wood fire, the one mending a rather faded green pelisse, the other embroidering very elaborately one of the muslin caps at that time universally worn by married ladies.

"I wish you'd let Martha go back to Philadelphia with us for the rest of the winter," said Mrs. Ashby, abruptly. "She is only two years younger than Dorris; but who would believe it? She isn't getting any advantages in this backwoods place! There's Dorris hasn't a minute of the day she can call her own, from week's end to week's end. Five new clubs she's joined this winter. She has her French, German, Italian, and music lessons also. Now Martha tells me she sometimes spends a whole afternoon

coasting with her brothers, or roaming the hills with those wild Clarke cousins. A sheer waste of time, Abigail! and she'll rue it when she finds herself behind the times in every branch of a young lady's education. This country life is so narrowing to a girl!"

"Martha loves the hills. I presume she'd miss the hills," began her mother; but what she would have said further I cannot tell you, for she was interrupted by a summons to the kitchen.

When Martha and Sarah returned from school, they were delighted to introduce their delicate-looking friend to the hill not far from the house, where it was to be hoped they could coast before many days. Part of the barn was portioned off for a workshop, and there they found the boys so busy constructing an ice-boat that they could spare time, on the girls' entrance, only to glance up and nod speechlessly. Dorris agreed enthusiastically to join Martha and the others — Charles, Edward, Sarah, and their cousin Kenneth — on a skating party they, with a neighbor's children, were planning for early next morning; and by eight o'clock all were abed, that they might waken in time for a long skate and slide before breakfast.

I called it a *skating* party; but it was that only for the boys, as girls never skated in those days and had to content themselves with sliding or being drawn about the ice on sleds. Five o'clock in the morning found them all gathered on the hard frozen road, the boys with skates in hand, and the pockets of boys and girls bulging with apples and doughnuts. The skates were clumsy constructions, such as Christmas stockings nowadays would scorn to hold. Uncle Nathan was there, too, armed with an enormous field-glass.

Dorris felt chilly when they started out in the darkness,

but a race with Charles along the road sent a delicious glow all through her limbs. Then she walked for a while beside Martha, and had a good time talking with her, getting glimpses into a life very different from her own.

"I read only English, and French a very little," Martha told Dorris, as they compared notes about their studies. "It must be jolly to know such a lot of languages as you do, and not have to depend on translations."

"O Martha," said Dorris, "you can't think how tired I get of them all! I wish I lived in Redfield with you. I study so many different things they all get the same taste, somehow; and my head feels tired all the time. But I won't think of classes now, in this beautiful free air! Come, let's run! Sarah is waiting for us."

Those exquisite early hours! The latter part of their way lay through the woods, and Dorris was astonished to find how many treasures Summer had forgotten to take away. An alder, with a generous disregard of the cold, held toward each of the little procession in turn a cluster of red catkins, putting to shame the neighboring scrub-oaks, which were most tenacious of their rich brown unshrivelled leaves. Another pleasing touch of brown was given, here and there, by the bare spaces of grass. From the patient snow-laden shoulders of a pitch-pine started a flock of snow-buntings; and further along were heard the whirring wings of a partridge. Thistles, wild carrot, and rock polypody appeared in fresh beauty, so delicately were they frosted; and a patch of sumach glowed like a cheery bonfire beside the way.

But now the children spied through the trees a bit of glistening ice! The boys unbuckled their skate-straps; and Martha, catching her friend's hand, reminded her that the forest would be there on their return. The walk had

made them thirsty ; and how refreshing were the big, juicy cranberries, half imbedded in the ice ! “ Beats your city drinks all holler ! ” said Jairus ; nor did Dorris disagree with him.

To her eyes, used so long only to the somewhat dull sights of city streets, this seemed a sort of fairyland into which, on reaching the pond, the boys flew on hurrying silver wings. It was the year of the great comet. They knew about that. Indeed, by Uncle Nathan’s advice, they had chosen this hour as the best for seeing it. But what he and they had not expected was the display of northern lights. A clear, lovely green, they flamed up the sky and marched upon the opposite shore. “ The sentinel stars set their watch in the sky,” shining with a noble steadfastness, and guiding the children’s course upon the glassy surface of the pond. Nor were they deprived of a sight of the moon. There she hung, a slender silver crescent. It was all so wonderful that Dorris and Martha didn’t feel like shouting or racing with the younger ones. Quite silently they walked about together, their hearts moved with reverent joy.

“ Teach me your mood, O patient stars !
 Who climb each night the ancient sky,
 Leaving on space no shade, no scars,
 No trace of age, no fear to die.”

quoted Dorris, softly.

When at last the sun sprang up, dismissing all these lesser lights, it was hard for Uncle Nathan to gather his little band together for the homeward march. Jairus Gray’s home was about a mile beyond theirs, and Martha made him come into breakfast with them. A ravenous set they were as they sat around the table ! Aunt Abigail could hardly supply them with hot johnny-cake and brewis.

"I'm glad to see you actually have some appetite, Dorris," said Mrs. Ashby, after observing her daughter some moments with growing astonishment; "but how odd it is that you should enjoy walking to a lonely pond, and sliding around there in the dismal dark!"

Then Uncle Nathan, and Dorris, and Edward, and Charles, and Sarah, and Kenneth, and Jairus all looked up eagerly; and together, as in one loud voice ("enough to deafen one for a year!" said Mrs. Ashby), "Dark!" they cried.

**"Children's children are the crown of old men, and the glory of
children are their fathers."**

CHAPTER VII.

PICKING UP DROPPED STITCHES.



WHAT in the world are those children doing up on the common?" asked Ruth. She leaned out of the parlor window, the better to see; and a dark, handsome young man, who went by the name of "Doctor" among these young people, came from across the room to look out with her, but forgot his original purpose in watching the movements of the beautiful girl at his side.

"I do believe," said Priscilla, "that they are having a funeral for their dolls, the way we used to for ours. Don't you remember, Peggy, how we dug little hollows in that soft rock, and buried our dolls there?"

"What fun it was!—if you can say that of a funeral," said Peggy.

"Did mother really let us bury our dolls?" said Ruth. "I don't remember it."

"Oh, not our good ones," said Priscilla. "Why, don't you remember? It seems like yesterday to me that Peggy and I used to make dolls of rolls of cotton cloth, and tie on arms and legs, and dress them in white cotton cloth. Then we'd have funerals for them, and bury them among the rocks."

Behind the meeting-house was a long row of horse-sheds, and at the end next the parsonage was a little building

where the hearse was kept. The Clarke children saw this hearse whenever there was a funeral in the village; and, as the cemetery was farther on, every funeral passed between their house and the meeting-house. So it came about that, when little girls, Priscilla and Peggy liked to play at having funerals. They looked back on those days as very distant indeed; for little Peggy was now almost a young lady, and had just come home from a term at a famous school in Providence called the "Greene Street School," kept by a Mr. Henry Fuller. It was about a mile from her uncle's house, through the heart of the city, across the bridge and Market Square. The head teacher was Miss Margaret Fuller, and Peggy was in several of her classes. She took the more interest in Peggy from the fact that Ruth had attended the school the previous year, and had been one of the older pupils and much beloved. Miss Fuller, though rather reserved, was most kind and just toward the pupils. She was so sincere that any word of praise from her meant a great deal; and Peggy was made happy by her commendation in the Latin class, in which Mr. Clarke's good early instruction helped her now to an excellent standing. The school was a pleasant and well-managed one; and Peggy enjoyed it greatly, the older young ladies showing her some attention for her sister's sake. The general exercises were sometimes very interesting. One day the celebrated teacher, Mr. Catherwood, entertained them with amusing accounts of his travels.

"Where can Richard be?" said Ruth, turning away from the window. "You know the Flower Festival songs must be practised this evening, and he was to bring down the hymn-books from the meeting-house."

"Oh, I got them," said Kenneth, looking up from a map he was drawing. "They're on the hall table."



PRISCILLA AND PEGGY.

"Kenneth and Richard always remind me of those two men in the Bible, (who are they, Henry?) one of whom said, 'I go,' and went not, the other, 'I go not,' and went," said Peggy, laughing.

"What are we all stifling in this room for?" asked Tom.

"Yes, do let's sit out on the common," said Priscilla. "I'll fix some cushions for you, mother, dear."

So out they all flocked, going to sit on or near the rocks just beyond the meeting-house where, as children, they had so often played. At one side was a broad stone which was used for a horse-block, on which the women who rode to meeting behind the men used to step off. This was a favorite spot; and the hostess of the little girls' tea-parties used to have this for her home, while her guests chose other rocks for theirs. The children found different kinds of stones, of which their father taught them the names. They found tiny garnets, and some stones had isinglass or mica in them, which it was delightful to pick out or strip off. Some of the softer stones the little girls would break up for "cake."

The sudden apparition of what seemed an endless procession of Clarkes issuing from the parsonage quite alarmed the little ones whom Ruth had been watching from the window, and one particularly small and bashful damsel broke into a loud cry of misery. Priscilla drew her gently into her lap, and bade her see how beautifully Kenneth could dance, while he soon changed the sobs to laughter with his capers. He loved children and had a great deal of tact with them. As for Priscilla, she had a "way," a friendliness, a comforting, quieting influence, that no child could resist.

"What a shy morsel!" said Mrs. Clarke, as the child ran off with her doll to join her companions.

"I used to be just that way," said Peggy. "I remember one day when dear Mrs. W. was calling, and I came into the room, mother told me to make a courtesy; and I was as if turned to stone. I really think it was utterly impossible for me to do it."

"I have suffered so much myself from fits of bashfulness," said her mother, "that I understood, so didn't force you to do it, nor punish you."

"Isn't it queer," went on Peggy, "how daring one can be in certain ways, while so cowardly in others! You remember Jack, our first horse? He was very spirited. Well, one of the first things I remember is his standing before the front door, unfastened, and no one near. I let myself down from step to step, till I sat down under him, and patted one of his fore-feet till he lifted it up. I held it and patted the shoe with my little hand as I had seen the blacksmith do in shoeing him. I must have been under three years old, as I could not step down from the doorstep; and I remember some one snatching me away from what they thought a dangerous situation."

"What a nuisance we youngsters must have been!" said Tom, taking his mother's hand and kissing it.

"She never let us guess it, if we were," said Priscilla.

"*You* never were, to be sure, you good old Prissy," said Peggy. "But the 'shines' Tom and I used to cut up! What are you laughing at, mother?"

"Oh, nothing especial. I was thinking of once when Ruth was a mere baby, and just beginning to talk. She was put to bed early one summer night, and I (for I had no help, or only a young girl) was getting tea for some expected visitors from Redfield who were to spend the night. Ruth was much disturbed by mosquitoes, and kept calling me, saying, 'Keety bite me, mamma, keety bite



THE HORSE-BLOCK.

me!’ till at last, quite distracted between my task and running upstairs, I told her to listen to their pretty singing. But soon the call came again; and, when I entered the room, Ruth called out in a piteous voice, ‘Keety bite me, mamma, keety bite me’; then, changing to a sweet, calm tone, ‘Don’t you hear them sin’? don’t you hear them sin’?’”

The young man with the dark curls looked up from his book on “Bones,” and listened with great interest to this thrilling anecdote.

“Richard, dear,” said his mother, “don’t scatter those bits of paper around. You know father likes to keep everything about the meeting-house looking very nice. That’s right!” as Richard gathered up the scraps and tucked them into his pocket.

“Ye gods! what have we here?” he exclaimed. “Lucky I didn’t tear this up!” He handed his mother the paper, on which were printed the following verses, written for some festive occasion at their grandfather’s in Cambridge:—

We are coming! we are coming!
What a merry host we are!
Laughing, shouting, singing, drumming,
We are coming, grandpapa!

Here are Roberts, by the dozen!
Here are Margarets, half a score!
Brother, sister, aunt, and cousin,
We are coming,—many more!

We are coming! Richards, Lucys,
Ruths, Priscillas, two and two;
George and Edward, little geese,
We can find no mates for you.

We are coming! Kenneths, Marys,
 Caroline, Henry, Charles, Louise,
 Thomas, too, without their cronies,—
 All are coming,— what a squeeze!

We are coming! don't you hear us,
 What a glorious noise we make!
 Grandmamma, you well may fear us,
 With your lemonade and cake!

We are coming! oh, believe us,
 Happy, joyful, glad we are!
 In your open arms receive us,
 With your blessing, grandpapa!

"What great old times we've had at Cambridge!" said Tom.

These verses had been printed some years before by the boys, who had a printing-press and published a little paper called *The Meteor*. They taught Peggy to set up type; and she frequently helped them out when they got hurried at last, as they often did. The office was in a little house in the yard.

"That man just driving up the cemetery road—look, quick, Priscilla!—looks just like Mr. Tilden," said Peggy.

"Who's Mr. Tilden?" asked Richard.

"He was a boarder we had when you were little," said Mrs. Clarke.

"I remember his taking us to Hillboro' to see the first steam-train on the Boston & Albany," said Kenneth.

"He used to ride horseback," said Peggy, "and often took me up in front of him for a ride. How I did enjoy it! He called me his little sweetheart. I used to think he would come for me when I was older; but, alas! he never came."

"You're so old, Peggy," said Priscilla, laughing.

"I remember the beautiful bonbon he brought me from Boston, and just how it looked," concluded Peggy, pensively.

"As reminiscences seem to be the order of the day," said Henry, "do you remember the monkey?" The brothers and sisters all laughed. One year one of the boys (a pupil) had a small monkey brought in one of his father's ships. The poor little fellow was very amusing, and fond of mother and the girls, but much afraid of the boys, who were rather cruel to him in trying to teach him to do tricks. He took refuge in a large elm-tree in the back yard, and, when Peggy came home from school, would often startle her by dropping suddenly onto her shoulder from the end of one of the drooping branches. He was very mischievous, and in the fall got loose and out into the orchard, where he amused himself by climbing an apple-tree and picking the apples, biting each one and throwing it down. When discovered, he had destroyed a large quantity, and then ran away and got into an apple orchard belonging to a neighbor, who complained bitterly, and with good reason, of his mischievousness. So he had to be kept chained more closely.

"I don't like to think of the poor little fellow," said Peggy.

"Speaking of disagreeable memories," said Ruth, "some of you children had one dreadful habit. Do you remember, mother, how Peggy and some of the others used to catch the spotted yellow turtles in the ditch, and even disgusting leeches? They would try to persuade all of us older ones to let them fasten the leeches on our arms to suck the blood. Then they'd put on a pinch of salt to make them let go."

"What good times we had going berrying!" said Priscilla.

"You speak as if you hadn't picked a huckleberry for twenty years, child!" said her mother, smiling. "There's no reason why you shouldn't go berrying to-morrow if you want to."

"Somehow it isn't quite so exciting now," said Peggy. "O Prissy, *do* you remember the time the bull ate up our dinner?"

The Clarke children had to ask leave when they went chestnutting, as chestnuts were beginning to have a market value; but in those days all berry pastures were considered public property, and any one could go wherever it was good picking. They often went huckleberrying or blueberrying in the distant pastures. They would take the old baby-wagon, put in it their pails, baskets, and lunch, and walk sometimes two miles to find the best berry-field in which to spend the day. On the occasion referred to by Peggy, the children had found a nice field and begun to pick, when they were frightened away by a farmer's bull, which they spied quietly feeding there. They then went over to another pasture, and picked till lunch-time, when they gathered their belongings in a pretty green hollow, out of which grew a fine elm. Enjoying its refreshing shade, the children spread out their lunch; while some of their number went to pick up apples under a neighboring tree. Just then came charging upon them a fine bull; and all ran hastily away and over a fence, from where they ruefully watched the animal eat up their lunch, or all he cared for, and turn the rest over, mixing it all up. The children were obliged to content themselves with apples, and hardly ventured to pick up the remains of their property. The berries, I believe, were saved.

"There's father driving into the yard!" exclaimed Peggy. She jumped up, and ran across the common to join him; and the others rose and sauntered down to the house, all but Priscilla and Kenneth, who lingered a few moments.

"How interesting it would be," said Priscilla, "if we could look into the future as we have been looking into the past!"

Her brother didn't reply at once. He lay on the grass, with his hands clasped under his head, and seemed to be watching the light, floating clouds, which were fast turning a deep rose-color.

"If I could have one wish for my *own* future," he said at last, "it would be that I should prove as good a father to my children as our father has been to us."

"You will be," said Priscilla, softly. And, to quote one of the children, "When *Priscilla* says a thing, it always comes true."

They talked a little while together; and then, hearing the guitar and their mother's sweet voice singing, "Of a' the airts the wind can blaw," they, too, got up and went into the house.

"I know not how it is with you,
I love the first and last,—
The whole field of the present view,
The whole flow of the past.

.

"Our lives, and every day and hour,
One symphony appear:
One road, one garden,— every flower
And every bramble dear."



COMMON BETWEEN THE MEETING-HOUSE AND PARSONAGE.

THE VILLAGE MEETING-HOUSE.

Still stands the ancient meeting-house
Upon the village green,
And white above the circling trees
The belfry tower is seen.

Uncolored through the simple panes
The common sunlight pours ;
No Gothic arches spring above
The latched and painted doors.

Their thresholds witness to the tread
Of feet long since at rest
In yonder field of moss-grown slates
With Bible texts impressed.

No more at rise and set of sun
Is heard the numbered toll
That spoke to all the country round
The passing of a soul ;

Yet still, with every new-born week,
Across the meadows fair
And over all the upland farms
Sounds the old call to prayer.

I walked across the village street
By absence made more dear ;
That summer Sunday held the bloom
And fragrance of the year.

I followed with the worshippers
The ancient house within ;
For me with all I saw and heard
Was mingled what had been.

Far deeper than the sermon's thought,
 Above the words of prayer,
 Sweeter than hymn and organ's breath,
 My soul's communion there.

For memory had new-kindled love,
 And love had quickened faith ;
 I lived that hour within a world
 That knew not change and death.

In vain the pride of ritual art,
 The pomps of worship, vain ;
 The village meeting-house may shame
 The incense-breathing fane !

The inward more than outward is,
 The soul than any shrine ;
 Alone can living love and trust
 The altar make divine.

Long may the ancient meeting-house
 Rise from the village green,
 And over all the country round
 Its belfried tower be seen.

Still may the call to praise and prayer
 Be heard each Sunday morn,
 And bind in growing faith the past
 With ages yet unborn.

Frederick L. Hosmer.

"FEARNBOROUGH," July, 1893.

FINIS.

[These additional verses of "The Village Meeting-house," by mistake omitted in the book, should be read after the ninth verse of the poem as it appears there.]

I minded not the preacher's theme,
Nor caught the words of prayer :
My thought had passed within the veil,
And walked with spirits there.

The faithful shepherd of the flock
Whose years knew such increase,
Who led in wisdom's simple ways
And by the streams of peace ;

The wise and upright citizen,
To each good cause allied,
Who brightened more an honored name
Through all the country-side ;

And souls that well had borne their part ;
And little children fair,—
Their unforgotten faces gleamed
In the illumined air.

I love the minster's vaulted roof,
Its walls of old renown,
Where sculptured marbles voice the past
And windowed saints look down :

Nor less I feel our Hebrew strain,
Distrustful still of art,
That lifts to the Invisible
Immediate the heart.

NOTE TO THE READER.

THIS story is true, excepting, as to year and place, part of the sixth chapter. The early morning expedition therein described was taken in 188— in “Fearnborough,” by some of “Kenneth’s” own children and pupils.

Throughout the other chapters I have used the “Recollections of Peggy,” in many cases giving her own words. If you go to see “Margaret Clarke,” she will tell you, in an entertaining way, of her childhood in the old home to which she is so loyal.

To the book’s best friend, Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale, I will only add :—

Pray do not lay the blame on *me*,
For but for *you* this would not be.

CAROLINE STETSON ALLEN.



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